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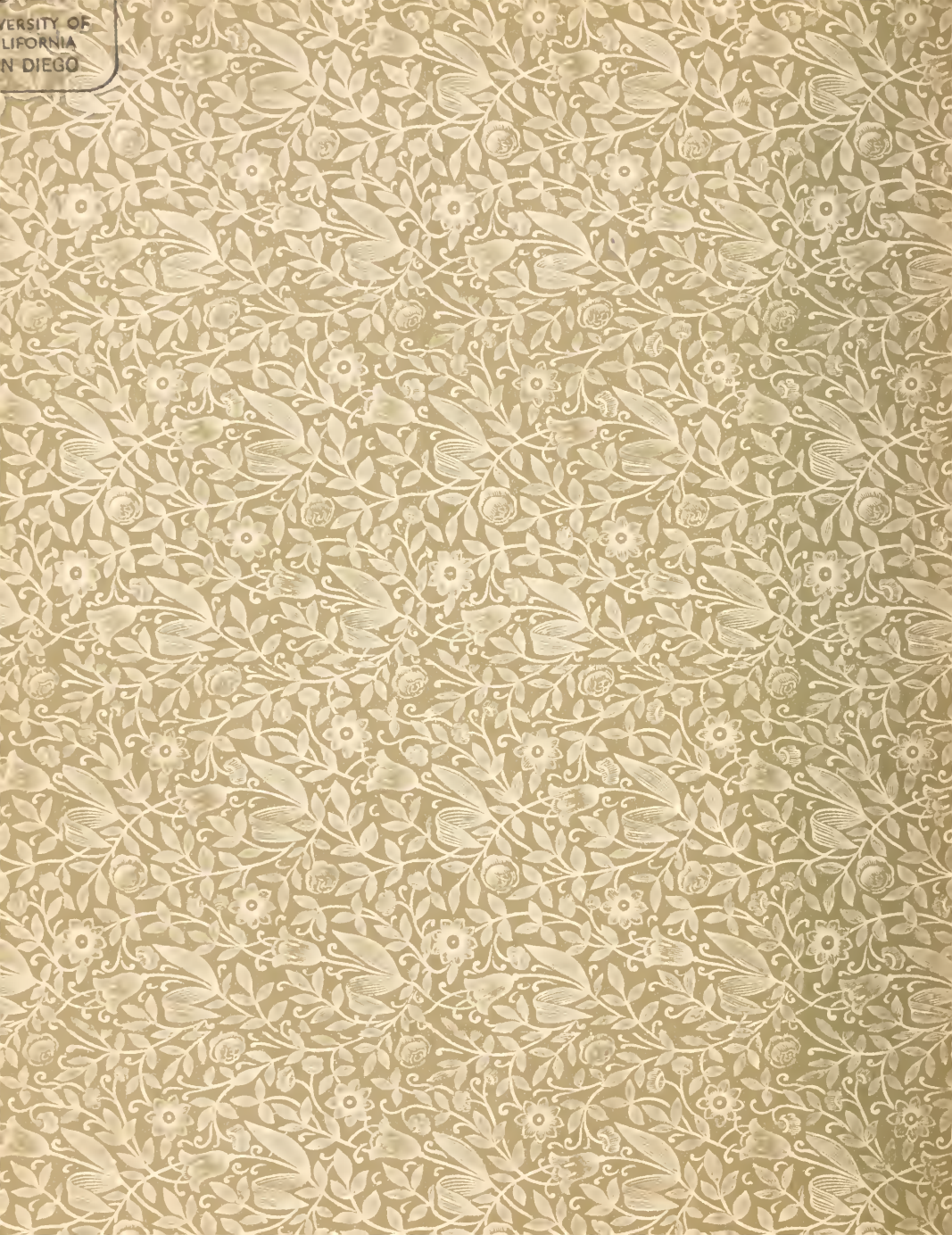
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YOUTH IN TWELVE CENTURIES





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YOUTH IN TWELVE CENTURIES

POEMS BY
M. E. B.



DRAWINGS BY
F. CHILDE MASSAM

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YOUTH IN TWELVE CENTURIES



TALA, OF THEBES.

1500 B. C.

UNDER the temple's shadow
 Within her palace gates,
The golden snood of the virgin
 Binding her thick black hair,
Calling her silken litter,
 Taia the Theban waits ;
While hymning of priest and maiden
 Soars through the quiet air,
Rising to Isis, the Giver,
As they march to the Sacred River.

Soon with the long train moving
 Over the waiting lands,
Through waving tufts of palm-trees
 Cooling the springs below,
Where the shade of the Sphinx falls grateful
 Over the burning sands,
To their pæans of joy will be added
 Her accents sweet and low ;
Rising to Isis, the Giver,
As they march to the Sacred River.

THOTHMES, OF KARNAK.

1500 B. C.

BRING forth the chariot, Strabo,
And deck the steeds with pride;
To-day amid my father's train
In princely garb I ride!
No more for me our boyish games
Or comrades' jocund call,
No more with fleet foot in the race
To chase the flying ball—
Who once puts youth's bright garments on,
Lays childhood's joy aside.

Now for the clash of shield and lance,
The shock of legions hurled
On gory fields, till victory rests
With standard fair unfurled!
Thou dread Osiris! who doth watch
Above the deeds of men,
Inspire my soul and nerve mine arm
Till in me lives again
The spirit that raised Egypt up
As Mistress of the World.



TAIA, OF THEBES.



THOTHMES, OF KARNAK.

NAN-TZE, OF NGAN-KING.

800 B. C.

To wander in the gloaming
By the Yangtse's yellow sands
To fret the shining plumage
Of my pheasant's golden wing,
To hear the bittern croaking
Across the marshy lands,
Or mid the banyan shadows
To hear the bulbul sing,
— What else is left to fill
A maiden's heart and hands?

Roses of love and pleasure
My brother's coming greet;
Glad for his hand's strong clasping
The warrior's glory waits,
Over his fortunate pathway
The sun shines fair and sweet,
Joy of the future beckons
And opes her welcoming gates,
— What path but sorrow lies
Before a maiden's feet?

CHOM-SIN, OF KIN-YUEN.

800 B. C.

LITTLE I care for the glamour
And fame of princely deeds!
Little I care for the glory
And tinsel of soldiers' joys!
Rather I'd chase the ball
With the noisy chattering boys;
Or measure my gaudy treasures
Of pipes and kites and toys,
Lying in golden sunshine
On mats of rushes and reeds!

Plague on the ruby button
And peacock feathers of state!
—When murderous hordes of the Mongols
From over the mountains come,
Striking with barbarous strength
In fury savage and dumb,
Let others go forth to meet them
With spear and dagger and drum,
I'd rather look out on the battle
From behind the sheltering gate!



NAN-TZE, OF NGAN-KING.



CHOM-SIN, OF KIN-YUEN.

CALYCE, OF ATHENS.

400 B. C.

UNDER the marble arch
Of the inner court remote,
Harking the pealing music
That rings in the joy-bells' note,
While in the street without,
And the thronging market-places,
They welcome the crownéd lord,
Victor of games and races,
With surging thunders of sound
And clamor of hoarse glad throat,

—What is it all to me,
Barred from life's tumult sweet,
Hearing but echoes of all
That passes in hall or street;
Ah! but for one swift glance
Where his glorious path rejoices
Through arches triumphant of palm
And jubilant greeting of voices!
To drop one red, red rose
To be crushed by his conquering feet!

TYRTEUS, OF CORINTH.

400 B. C.

(Outside the Sacred Grove of Jupiter.)

O DAY beloved of gods and men,
In happy omen rise!
Smoke on the altar-stone of Zeus,
O joyous sacrifice!
For now within the Sacred Grove
The chanting priests proclaim
The opening of those lofty rites,
Whose end shall give to fame
Another hero, and to Greece
One more immortal name!

See how the thronging athletes press
The fair Olympian meads;
Bœotian wrestlers; and the straight
Swift race that Sparta breeds;
Strong charioteers of Thessaly;
And Thracian spearsmen brave;
—Ah! if but once mine ardent foot
Might press the stadium's pave
What higher gift of gods or men
Could hope or glory crave!



CALYCE, OF ATHENS.



TYRTÆUS, OF CORINTH.

CLAUDIA, OF ROME.

50 B. C.

O DAWN of the gods beloved
How rarely thy coming thrills —
To-day we go to the villa
On the crest of the Alban Hills!
Freely I change for its freedom
The splendor of court and hall,
The splash of the marble fountain,
The glow of the pictured wall,
The mirrors of shining silver —
Gladly I leave them all.

I tire of the glittering sameness
That marks the splendid town!
But there, through golden vineyards,
Fair cascades sparkle down,
Branches of cypress and olive
Tangle the sunshine still,
The wood-doves coo in the branches,
And sweet leaves dance at will
To the hymn of the Vestal Virgins
On the beautiful Alban Hill.

VESPASIAN, OF ROME.

44 B. C.

“Come forth! Come forth! my Titus,”
The young Vespasian calls :
“Nor rest, nor sleep, have place to-night
Within the city’s walls ;
The gates are choked with crowding,
The air is rent with cries,
A thousand torches’ flaming light
Defy the gloomy skies
Where the great Consul, done to death
By Brutus’ dagger, lies !

“Drop from your hand the unrolled chart,
And fling the stylus by ;
What are such teachings worth to us
When such a man could die !
More than all fame their lore can bring,
Give me to say instead
— What time the thin white frosts of age
Shall rest upon my head —
‘A boy, in Rome, mine eyes once looked
Upon our Cæsar — dead ! ’”



CLAUDIA, OF ROME.



VESPASIAN, OF ROME.

HADASSEH, OF TIBERIAS.

A. D. 90.

COME to the house-top, Rachel !
The waning day droops low ;
Wrap round thy braids the Tyrian scarf,
For cool the night winds blow ;
And bring thy light stringed nebel
To aid the sad sweet song
That sings in every Jewish heart
Its tale of grief and wrong —
While o'er the lake Gennesareth
The red sun sinks to meet its death !

Bid from the inner terrace
Amrah, the bond-maid, bring
Fresh wheaten cakes and honey,
Clear water from the spring ;
Here we will take our evening meal,
And rest, till floating by
The pale moon sails her magic boat
Across the deep blue sky,
And in the lake Gennesareth
The red sun sinks to meet its death !

GAMALIEL, OF JERUSALEM.

A. D. 70.

O JERUSHALAIM the Holy!
The crown of thy peace is fled!
Under the yoke of the spoiler
The pride of thy life hath sped!
Low are the climbing arches
Of thy Temple wondrous fair,
Like a sheaf of silver fountains
That rose through the sunlit air,
And under the wreck of its glory
The priests of thy faith lie dead!

From the place of our power and gladness,
Whither we go who knows?
From halls of our fathers to bondage;
From arms of our mothers to blows;
To chains and thirst and hunger;
To toil on the strangers' shore;
To serve at the Roman's table;
To bend at the Roman's oar—
Jehovah! Thou God of the Mighty!
Remember thy people's woes!



HADASSEH, OF TIBERIAS.



GAMALIEL, OF JERUSALEM.

GWENCH'LAN, OF SOISSONS.

A. D. 475.

TRAINED for the chase and the foray ;
Fearless in danger and woe ;
Eager for strife and for glory ;
Cruel to slave and to foe ;
Light is his foot in the dance
When cymbal and harp-notes call,
But swift from his hand in battle
The rain of the spear-points fall —
Hoch ! for the son of Chararic !
Hoch ! for Gwench'lan the Gaul !

Eyes of the hawk look forth
From under his martial crest ;
Steel is his sinewy arm ;
Fire is the heart in his breast ;
Hither the silver armilla,
And hither the chain of gold,
For young is the boy in years,
But valor bath made him old —
Hoch ! for the son of Chararic !
Hoch ! for Gwench'lan the Bold !

FRIEDMUNDA, OF CHALONS.

A. D. 475.

LLANTILDIS ! Llantildis !

Now wherefore dreaming there,
While onward to the Field of Mars
Press Jarl and Prince and Frère !
Doth our dull life so many strands
Of joy and brightness hide
Thou canst forego so brave a sight
As when the warriors ride,
At joust and tourney playing,
To silver trumpets braying !

Nay ! never heed thy tresses ;
The braids are smooth and bright ;
Snatch thy long mantle from the bench
And set thy veil aright ;
Nor care to-day if in the web
No single stitch is set,
Nor if against the cage's bars
Thy pet birds moan and fret,
— But haste where sword-strokes flashing,
Beat time on bronze shields clashing !



GWENCH'LAN, OF SOISSONS.



FRIEDMUNDA, OF CHALONS.

RANGHILDA, OF LUNDE.

A. D. 850.

Look at my bracelets, Gudrun,
Heavy with gold and pearl,
Snatched from the dead white arm
Of a timid Danish girl!
And here be necklets of silver
And tunics of silken sheen,
Torn from the regal treasure
Of some pallid Eastern queen,
And brought from red fields of slaughter
To the feet of the Sea King's daughter!

Cover the floor with rushes,
Kindle the fires in the hall,
Hide with the broidered arras
The beams of the smoke-stained wall;
Freyga! Mother of Heroes!
Thanks for thy bounteous hand,
That wins for us spoil and glory
On the shore of the stranger's land,
And brings from the blood-stained water
New joy for the Sea King's daughter!

SIGURD, OF JOMSBURG.

A. D. 850.

Down through the Drontheim fiord
Sail the ships lightly,
On their decks shield and sword
Shine, gleam brightly,
Viking and hero stand,
Armor on shoulder,
Stern eyes and stature grand
Awe the beholder—
How doth my heart beat high,
With them to fight or die!

When flows the mead at night
And scalds are singing
Deeds of the Norseman's might
To harp-strings ringing,
If in the song of fame,
Of good blows telling,
I could but hear my name
In wild shouts swelling—
Thor! for that moment high,
Glad at thy feet I'd die!



RANGHILDA, OF LUNDE.



SIGURD, OF JOMSBURG.

ZAHRA, OF BAGDAD.

A. D. 1150.

Now who hath seen my Zahra?

Too long hath she been roaming,
And dancing to the castanets

Beneath the date tree's shade;
Here waits the empty water-jar

And soon will fall the gloaming —
But who can put a woman's head

On shoulders of a maid,
Or teach that life's true measure,
Is Duty first — then Pleasure!

Oh daughter, little daughter!

Here lies the wheat for kneading,
And there thine idle shuttle

Rests empty by the loom;
O who hath seen my Zahra

Or whither is she speeding?
Alas! 'tis hard to look for fruit

When youth is all abloom,
Or teach that life's best measure,
Is Duty first — then Pleasure!

ABULCAsEN, OF DAMASCUS.

A. D. 1150.

FLEET foot of the desert!
Thou steed of my pride!
'Tis the voice of thy master
That calls to his side!
With the star of the prophet
Set fair on thy brow,
And thy swift step as light
As the bird on the bough,
Like the flight of an arrow
Afar let us ride.

The crescent grows dim
As the cross waxeth bright,
The sun of our people
Is sinking in night;
Still, still, as we bound
O'er the sand of the plain,
My steel at my side
And my hand on thy rein,
I find the lost glory!
I feel the old might!



ZAHRA, OF BAGDAD.



ABULCASIN, OF DAMASCUS.

LIPPO, OF FLORENCE.

A. D. 1434.

BLUE is the wonderful sky
Of Firenze, the fairest of cities,
Clamor of voices and bells
Rings through the jubilant air,
Banners are hung on the walls,
Poets are singing their ditties,
While Cosmo the Medici rides
With his retinue, lordly and fair,
Through welcoming shouts of the square!

And out to the farthest gates
Surge laughter and music blended,
And into the darkest lane
Creeps something of sunshine and glee;
Nay! let them talk as they will
Of times and of men more splendid,
Never were days of the world
More wondrous than those I see,
With their promise of glory for me!

GUISTINA, OF FERRARA.

A. D. 1434.

HERE in the convent garden,
 With pencil and with books.
I commune with the glory
 And the souls of other times ;
I read delight and beauty
 In nature's loving looks,
And weave my maiden fancies
 Across my poet's rhymes —
Here in the convent garden
 With pencil and with books.

And if sometimes like summer clouds
 Across a summer sky,
Vague longings, — swift as shadows,
 Across the sunshine — creep,
To join the laughing maidens
 Who carol dancing by,
As on the bright campagna
 They watch the browsing sheep —
'Tis but a passing summer cloud
 Below a summer sky !



LIPPO, OF FLORENCE.



GUISTINA, OF FERRARA.

GIDEON, OF FAVISTOCK.

A. D. 1644.

A PLAGUE take all this fooling
Of musty books and schooling,
'Tis well enough for coward folk
Whose blood is pale and poor!
And out on all their preaching
Of learning and of teaching!
'Tis honor lifts the gentleman
Above the paltry boor—
Red honor, snatched from fields of blood,
Like this of Marston Moor!

Full well my tongue rehearses
Brave Greek and Latin verses,
But glad I'd put such prating by
If thus I might secure
To be but three years older,
To stand with gun on shoulder,
And strike for holy England's right
One good blow strong and sure
Beside my sire, on such a field
As this of Marston Moor!

AUDREY, OF YORK.

A. D. 1644.

SWIFT with the dexterous needle,
Slow with the clumsy pen,
Poor in the knowledge of books,
But rich in the knowledge of men;
Learned in housewife lore,
Skilled as nurse and as leech,
Pure and sweet in the soul,
Strong and true in the speech —
Many a Master of Arts
Could Audrey the Puritan teach.

Wholesome in person and taste,
Prudent and formal and kind,
Swift of temper and wit,
Slow of fancy and mind,
Lofty and proud with the rich,
Humble and fond with the low,
Loving and leal to the friend,
Haughty and fierce to the foe —
Blessed and fair is the land
Where maidens like Audrey shall grow.



GIDEON, OF TAVISTOCK.



AUDREY, OF YORK.

GABRIELLE, OF TOULON.

A. D. 1720.

O THE court of the king!
Only to tread in its measures,
Only to join in its pleasures,
Feel its bright witchery round me,
Take what its riches can give!
Here may be love true and tender,
But the dull weight of this splendor
Hangs like a fetter about me;
There at the court one could live!

Fleetly my fancy takes wing!
Here is but dullness and duty;
There is the glamour of beauty.
Here is but sameness and longing,
There all that gladness can bring.
Here drag the wearisome hours;
There dance the days through the flowers—
O but to breathe of their fragrance
At the beautiful court of the king!

ANDRÉ, OF PARIS.

A. D. 1720.

To-day we ride to the hawking,
In the forest of Fontainebleau,
I at the king's right hand
With his hooded bird on my fist,
And the train of Ladies and Lords
On palfreys curveting slow,
Or bounding through hedgerow and field
Whither their fancies list,
And falcons with silver bells
Leashed at pommel and wrist.

And the hollowed-eyed, hungry canaille
Will gather to see us pass ;
Little we care for their silence
And less for their muttering cries —
While the ladies' silken gowns
Will brush the dew from the grass,
As they listen to sonnet and song
In praise of their lips and their eyes,
And the murmur of joy repeats
The laugh of the summer skies.



GABRIELLE, OF TOULON.



ANDRÉ, OF PARIS.

JONATHAN, OF BOSTON.

A. D. 1813.

AND so the Shannon in battle
Has taken the Chesapeake,
With Lawrence her brave commander
Mortally hurt in the fight!
Well, let them joy in their spoil;
Poor are our people and weak,
But poorer and weaker before,
We forced them to yield us our right,
And the soul of a nation is stronger
Than armor or sinew of might!

Often my Gran'ther has told
The tale of the olden time,
The starving at Valley Forge,
The battle-fields piled with slain,
The marching a-thirst and a-cold,
The story of deeds sublime;
Let England forget, an' she will,
The record they wrote so plain,
The land they bought with their blood
Shall never be hers again!

DOROTHY, OF PHILADELPHIA.

A. D. 1812.

Come hither, child, this minute,
And leave that jingling spinnet,
There's no such music in it

As these rumors strange and new!
His talk of warlike nations,
And hostile declarations,
These calls for arms and rations —

Is there no part for you
But routs and balls, when Freedom calls
For loyal hearts and true?

Call Nancy as she paces
The minuet's slow graces,
Bid Patty from her laces,
Her patches and her frills ;
We need the time they're spending
For making and for mending,
For knitting and for tending,

For ready hands and wills,
'Till Peace once more from shore to shore
Makes glad our happy hills.

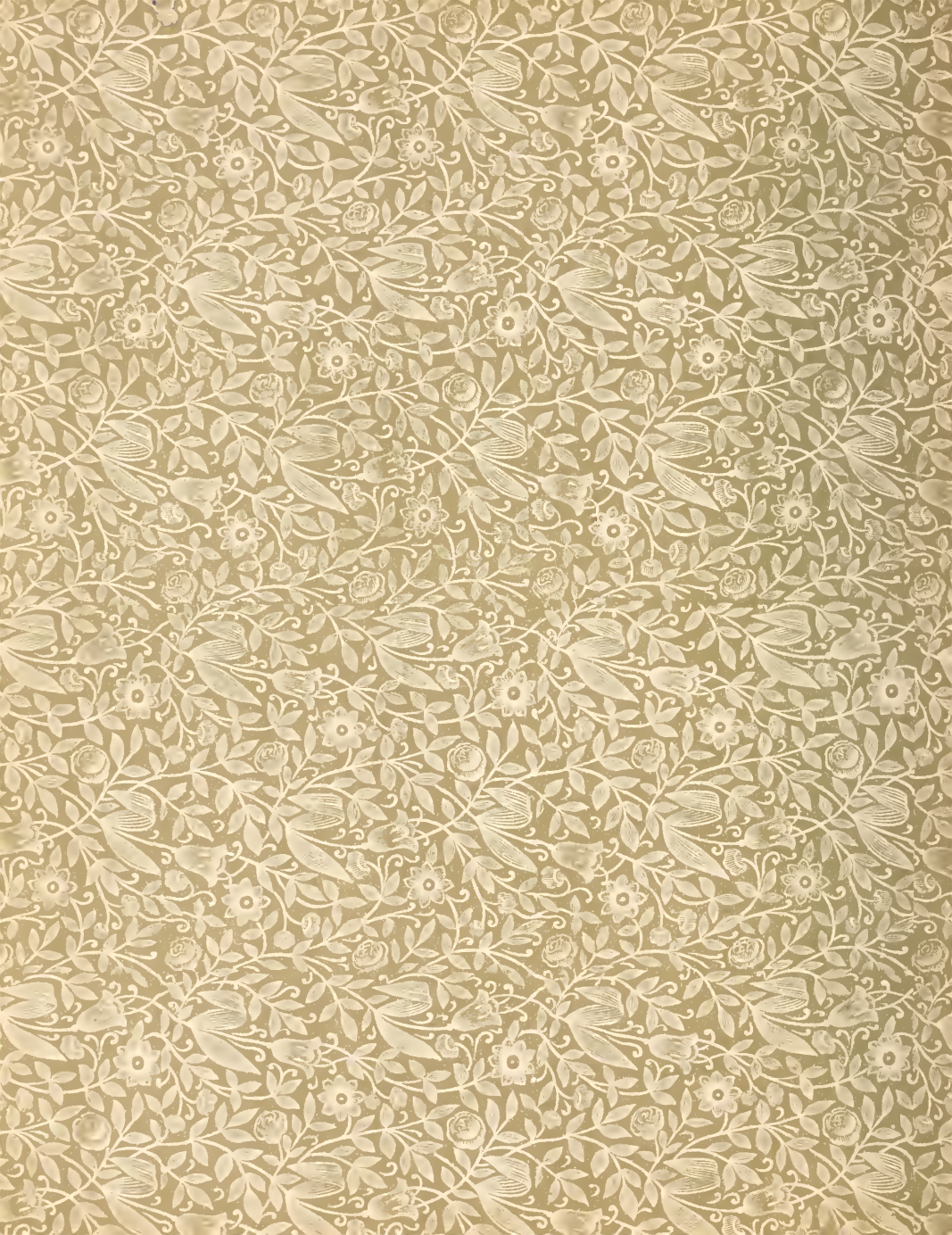


JONATHAN, OF BOSTON.



DOROTHY, OF PHILADELPHIA.





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